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AUTHOR Pedersen, Paul
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ABSTRACT

Symbolic meaning expressed by Chinese language characters is helpful to non-Chinese persons in understanding Chinese culture. The implicit metaphors in Chinese characters present pictographic descriptions of the meaning in the form of a story, situation, or symbol which places the otherwise abstract concept in a cultural context. All languages depend to some extent on metaphor for their meaning but the metaphorical meanings of language are most obvious in the Chinese language. Implications of understanding metaphors for non-Chinese counselors working with a Chinese cultural setting are addressed. Body parts are anthropomorphized to denote qualities of behavior and abstract concepts in very literal forms. The person is seen in a context of complicated features acting in or out of harmony with one another. Behavior in the context of nature imagery is seen through a series of small stories that illustrate abstract concepts and establish the context of their meaning. The accumulation of knowledge as a process is likewise described comprehensively by analogy. In respect to the concept of identity, the Chinese characters suggest what is expected of a person. Differences between the traditional Chinese and English-speaking cultures are noted that account for Chinese children developing a cognitive style favoring interdependence of relationships, and for American children analyzing and classifying a stimulus complex in a more independent manner. Other characteristics of Chinese culture relating to the expression of hostility, family ties, and conformity are considered. (SW)

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PICTOGRAHIC METAPHORS AS VEHICLES OF SYMBOLIC MEANING TOWARD* CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Paul Pedersen

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In multi-racial, pluralistic, developing nations, each culture exists in isolation emphasizing its own language and culture. Inter-cultural exchange is usually shared by means of the English language and in a Western culture setting. We assume that the English language and Western culture is alien from all indigenous alternative traditions such as among Chinese speaking persons.

The notion of mental health among the Chinese includes both somatic and psychological systems combined in a holistic picture of personal "health" (Kleinman, Kunstadter, Alexander and Gale, 1975). In discussing counseling priorities for the Chinese it is important to recognize differences between the traditional Chinese and English-speaking cultures. Chinese elders employ more severe discipline than American parents; Chinese parents emphasize mutual dependence in the family rather than self-reliance and independence; Chinese children see the world in terms of relationships rather than with an individualistic self-orientation; Chinese are more strongly tradition-oriented and more situation-centered, as well as more sensitive to environmental factors—all of which results in a more passive than active attitude toward life. As a result of these contrasting differences, Chinese children develop a cognitive style favoring interdependence of relationships, while American children prefer to differentiate, analyze and classify a stimulus complex in a more independent manner (Chiu, 1972; Pedersen, 1976; Yeh & Chu, 1974).

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Examples of Chinese characters for this article were drawn from Mandarin made easy by Chiang Ker Chiu, Chin Fen Book Store, 9 Oxley Rise, Singapore 9.

The Chinese child is taught to handle hostility without expressing anger. Aggressive behavior is severely punished. Sharing and collaterality is encouraged, resulting in a "shame-oriented" conscience in the child. Sibling rivalry for parental favoritism would result in both children being punished for being aggressive and competitive. At about age six, the situation changes and indulgence for young children is contrasted with harshness to instill discipline for maturing youth. Aggressive impulses are handled through basic social rhythms of ho-ping (harmony) and hand luan (the confusion of vented aggression). If the objective of early permissiveness is to instill a strong sense of self-esteem, the discipline is intended to result in commitment to family above self. As a result, the youth matures with a "selfish" longing to recapture the oral pleasures and the sense of power known early in life (Solomon, 1971). The system of filial piety represents a contract of mutual exchange where parents devote themselves to children who are expected to support the parents in old age. Relationships among family members provide a model for moral virtue in all areas of society, with the ideals of family organization becoming the basis of national government. If parents from English-speaking countries might send their maturing child into the world to gratify hostile or pleasure seeking impulses outside the family, the traditional Chinese "Confucian" approach would reject this solution as "abandonment" and require the son to realize his social identity within a lifelong prolongation of his original dependency (Solomon, 1971).

The Chinese situation-centered world is characterized by permanent ties which unite family and clan and allow the individual to

experience and exchange mutual dependence with others in that group.

> The individual enmeshed in such a human network is likely to react to his world in a complacent and compartmentalized way, complacent because he has a secure and inalienable place in his human group, and compartmentalized because he is conditioned to perceive the external world in terms of what is within his group and what is outside it (Hsu, 1963, p. 1).

There is a tendency toward conformity in Chinese culture in the direction of a group norm. Meade and Barnard (1973) suggest that Chinese are more sensitive to group stress and thus, in conflict situations, tend to change their opinions, seeking harmony or balance more frequently than Americans. They seek to live in harmony with their surroundings and do not regard nature as opposed to humanity (Nakamura, 1964).

The language people learn teaches concepts, structures and vocabulary structures for communication that limits the range of our interaction with others (Miller and McNiel, 1969; Whorf, 1956). People speaking different languages experience the world in different ways (Osgood, 1979).

The written Chinese character contains implicit metaphorical data necessary to meaningful understanding of Chinese culture by non-Chinese persons. The implicit metaphors in Chinese characters present pictographic descriptions of the meaning in the form of a story, situation or symbol which places the otherwise abstract concept in a cultural context. Nakamura (1964) describes in detail how Asian languages can become vehicles for understanding implicit values and implied meaning in Asian cultures once the metaphors of the language are properly understood. Lakoff and Johnson (1979) present a systematic framework for the study of metaphors that demonstrates how completely our conceptual system is dominated by Western values and

assumptions. The conceptualization of meaning is largely through interlocking systems of metaphor. There is widespread acceptance that metaphors in language are important vehicles for understanding a culture.

We know from the Sapir Whorf hypotheses (Miller & McNeil, 1969) that the language we learn embodies concepts structures and vocabulary which forms the basis of our behavior, so that people who speak different languages experience the world in different ways. We know that these metaphors occur in deep and shallow levels of meaning in their control both of how we express an abstract concept and how we perceive a concept expressed by others. We know that societies differ with some emphasizing the importance of context (Hall, 1977) or field dependence (Witkin 1977) perspectives and others more abstractly describing their experience in terms of low context and field independent perspectives. The task of this paper is to demonstrate some examples of how these theoretical principles apply to pictographic metaphors as vehicles of symbolic meaning toward cross-cultural understanding of Chinese by non-Chinese.

We usually communicate more than we intend to in a cross-cultural setting, and consequently misunderstand one another. Intercultural

communication depends on the indirect mode of communication as much or more than those ideas communicated directly. Metaphors are an important vehicle of indirect meaning where the story or analogy conveys a richness of meaning in non-abstract modes of communication. All languages depend to some extent on metaphor for their meaning but the metaphorical meanings of language are most obvious in the Chinese language. This article will demonstrate the importance of understanding metaphors for non-Chinese counselors working with a Chinese cultural setting.

1. Body Image:

There is abundant evidence that Chinese somatize psycho-social distress both as a means of coping with stress and as explanation of the effect stress has on the person (White, 1981). If we look at how parts of the body are used to illustrate otherwise abstract concepts in Chinese characters we might be able to understand the phenomena of somatization more accurately from a Chinese perspective.

Each Chinese character has a component called the "radical" which provides a clue to the basic metaphor within the character concept. If we look at several characters with the "mouth" radical we see that the mouth contributes to the meaning of happiness, agreement, and eating, in combination with other significant aspects of the character.

喜 ㄒㄧ³ hsǐ happy; joy; to delight. From 口 mouth and 壴 a band of musicians. 口

合 ㄏㄜ² hé to close; join; agree; fit; legal. From 亼 notion of union, of assemblage, of a junction of different elements, represented by three lines. Three is used to mean many. Etymologically, many mouths speaking together; good understanding. 口

吃 ㄔ¹ ch'ih to eat. From 口 mouth and 乞 to pray. 口

If we look at how other parts of the body relate to meaning in the Chinese characters we see that eye relates to straight, rightness and mutuality; arms relate to strength or the absence of arms to final completion; legs to overcoming; face to wanting; nose to the idea of self; being out of breath to deficiency, a bent posture to enticement, and an ear becomes the door to knowledge.

Radical

直 ㄓˊ² chíh straight; not curved in the least; perfectly right; perpendicular. 十 shíh ten 目 mù eyes having looked at 一 ī something, did not discover any deviation. 目

相 ㄒㄧㄤ¹ hsiāng mutual; each other; one another. Pronounced ㄒㄧㄤ⁴ hsiàng to examine; inspect; a photo. 目 to watch from behind 木 a tree, or to open 目 an eye in 木 the woods, in order not to be surprised by a foe or a wild beast. 目

力 ㄌㄧˋ⁴ lì strength; force; power. This is a pictogram of the forearm, symbolic of strength. 力

了 ㄌㄧㄠ³; ·ㄌㄜ liǎo; ·le finished; done; past; a sign for past tense or denoting certain action done. A child without arms, mutilated. 亅

克 ㄎㄜˋ⁴ k'è conquer; overcome; subdue; repress; able to; fit for. From 𠧪 (abbreviated to 古) kǔ load and 儿 legs capable of bearing the load. 儿

要 ㄧㄠˋ⁴ yào to want; to wish; to have a desire for; to need; to ask for; about to; important. (Old meaning) the waist. Represented by 覀 a human face and 女 two hands girding the waist, to mean waist. 襾

自 ㄗˋ tzù self; oneself; from; since. It is thought to resemble the nose. Extended meanings: (1) self; I; one's own; personally; the nose being the projecting part, and in some way the characteristic of the individual. (2) starting point; the origin; beginning; evolution; the nose being, according to Chinese embryology, the starting point of the bodily evolution. 自

欠 ㄑㄧㄢˋ ch'iàn to be deficient; to owe money. 人 a man who 𠂉 breathes out vigorously, and soon gets out of breath, to be exhausted, deficiency, etc. 欠

勾 ㄍㄡ¹ kōu to entice. 勹 a man bends in such a way as he intends to get something for 厶 himself secretly or to do something wrong. 勹

聞 ㄨㄣˊ wén hear; learn by report; to smell; hearing; fame; the surname Wen. From 耳 ěrh ear and 門 mén door; the ear is the door of knowledge. 門

In understanding emotions from a Chinese perspective, the radical for heart is particularly significant. Some examples of characters using the heart radical describe being hurried or busy, ashamed, patient, thoughtful, quick, to wish or expect and to bear with patience. You hear with your heart.

忙 ㄇㄤˊ máng in a hurry; hurriedly; busy. From 忄 hsīn heart and 亡 wáng dead, ruin. A person (represented by 忄 hsīn heart) may be so overwhelmed by work as to be 亡 wáng ruined or dead. 忄

悤 ㄘㄨㄥ¹ ts'ūng (used in combination) in a hurry; hurriedly. From 忄 hsīn heart and 囱 ch'uāng a window. When 忄 hsīn the heart is restless, one looks through 囱 ch'uāng the window, to see what is coming. It is also written as 悤 and 叡. 忄

慚 ㄘㄢˊ ts'án ashamed; feel ashamed of; conscience-stricken. From 忄 hsīn heart and 斬 chǎn to cut off, as if one's conscience. 忄

愧 ㄎㄨㄟˋ k'uì ashamed; feel ashamed of; conscience-stricken. From 忄 hsīn heart and 鬼 kuǐ demon, as if leading one astray from the path of good; hence, to feel ashamed. 忄

忍 ㄖㄣˇ jěn to bear patiently; to endure; to restrain. 刃 a knife over 忄 the heart, to denote the quality of patience as distinguished from other qualities. To bear so patiently until the heart is wounded. 忄

想 ㄒㄧㄤˇ hsiǎng to think; consider; to have a desire for; to wish; to expect. From 忄 heart and 相 as the phonetic. The physical heart, considered as the lord of the body, and regarded by Chinese as one of the five senses. 忄

快 ㄎㄨㄞˋ k'uài quick; fast. From 忄 hsīn (contracted to 忄) heart and 夬 chüèh to decide. The quickest thing is a decision from the heart. 忄

念 ㄋㄧㄢˋ niàn read; study; think of. 今 chīn to present a fact of the past to 忄 hsīn the mind. Derived meanings, to think of, study, etc. Radical 忄

忍 ㄖㄣ³ jěn (used in combination) bear with patience; to have patience; endure; tolerate; stand; be patient; patience. From 心 hsīn the heart, used here to denote the quality of patience as distinguished from other qualities by the use of 刃 jèn a cutting weapon. 心

聽 ㄊㄧㄥ¹ t'īng hear; listen. 直 chíh (contracted to 壬) rectification of 心 hsīn the heart of 士 t'íng a disciple or a listener by his 耳 ěrh ear. 耳

2. Identity:

If we look at the concept of identity we find the characters tell us a great deal about what is expected of a person. If we look at the characters related to being a woman we see the concept of ritual passivity or avoidance, but also the meaning of excellence, management and goodness. The stereotype of Chinese females as passively accepting a lower status is obviously an oversimplification.

女 ㄋㄩ³ nǚ a girl; a woman; female. The ancient character represented the ritual bearing of the Chinese women, the arms hanging down, and crossed over the body. The shoulders, arms, chest and legs were outlined. 女

毋 ㄨˊ wú (literary) abstain; avoid; not to; do not; don't do. A woman placed under — lock and key for misbehaviour. A composite character indicating a prison of the guilty women. Each palace had a place reserved for the offending imperial concubines. The women thus confined were discarded, unemployed, and saw nobody. Hence the derived meanings, to abstain, to avoid, etc. 毋

妙 ㄇㄧㄠ⁴ miào wonderful; excellent; an adjective of admiration. From 少 shào young (also) and 女 nǚ woman. 女

妻 ㄑㄧ¹ ch'ī wife. This represents 女 nǚ a woman and 𠕋, an abbreviation of 事 shìh, affairs; business. To manage affairs of the household is the duty of a wife. 女

Radical

好 ㄏㄠ³ hǎo good; nice; fine; finished; ready; repaired (after being out of order); all right!; easy to; recovered (from illness); well; very. What is good, whom one loves: 女 nǚ wife and 子 tzǔ children. Pronounced hào to like; fond of; addicted to. 女

Likewise if we look at the characters related to being a man we see egoism, trust, respect, genuineness, dependability, strength, and authority. It is obvious that the stereotype of Chinese males as non-egoistic oversimplifies a component of Chinese male identity as the characters themselves indicate. The self is like a weaving loom where each thread has a part or the threading of a silk worm.

大 ㄉㄚ⁴ tà big; large; great. It is a pictogram of man standing by himself (head, arms and legs), egoistically considered as the greatest or most important of all. Radical 大

我 ㄨㄛ³ wǒ I; me. Comprises of 手 a hand, holding 戈 a spear, to protect oneself; hence, I, the individual, or ego. Radical 戈

信 ㄒㄧㄣ⁴ hsìn believe; trust; faith; a letter (epistle). From 人 jén a man and his 言 yén words, i.e. the truth, faithful, trustworthy. Confucius said, 'I do not know how a man without 信 hsìn truthfulness is to get on.' 人

弔 ㄉㄧㄠ⁴ tiào pay a visit of condolence to; pay respects to (the deceased). Composition: A man who carries 弓 kūng a bow over his shoulder. The Chinese of olden times did not bury their dead. The corpse was packed up in a bundle of grass and left to rot away in some remote place. The rite of condoling, at that time, consisted in offering one's self with a bow, to protect the corpse against wild beasts and birds. 弓

依 ㄧ ㄧ follow (as advice); obey; according to; rely on; depend upon. From 人 jén man and 衣 ī clothes; as if one should say clothes lean on the man. 人

男 ㄋㄢ² nán the man, in opposition to the woman, the male. The one who exerts his 力 strength in the work of 田 the field, the woman being busy at home. Radical 田

父 ㄈㄨ⁴ fù a father. It is from 又, the right hand, wielding ノ a rod and thus exerting authority. Hence, ideographically, it is a father who keeps the law and order of the home intact. Radical 父

真 ㄓㄣ¹ chēn true; real; genuine; actual; sincere; unfeigned; really; in fact; indeed. The perfectly true man with 直 chíh upright conduct above 八 the common people. 目

己 ㄐㄧ³ chǐ self; oneself (an arbitrary character). The character represents the threads of the woof, on the weaving-loom; ㄱ on the top, the threads transversal, one thread longitudinal; ㄴ at the bottom, the thread in the shuttle. 己

緣 ㄩㄢ² yüán a reason; affinity. The pull of even 糸 a tiny silk thread may draw together the affinity for a marital relationship. 糸

3. Nature Imagery:

We know that the Chinese draw upon nature to describe abstract concepts. Each character presents a small story illustrating examples when the abstract concept would apply. Perhaps by examining the natural context we can come to better understand how abstract concepts are used and ultimately translated into English. Happiness is like an orchestra with drum and bells, to laugh is like bamboo in the wind, difficult is like birds in a drought, trouble is like fire in the head, to dare is like attacking a bear without weapons, to produce is like sprouting rice, to interpret is like fluttering birds, to be selfish is like a silkworm in its cocoon, freedom is like the dawn sun filling the sky, leisure is like moonlight streaming through a closed door, foreign is outside the ritual limits, and splendour (the term used to describe China) is a plant covered with flowers.

樂 ㄌㄜˋ lè happy joy; pleasure. Pronounced ㄩㄝˋ yüèh (used in combination) music. 木 mù resembles the support from which 白 a drum and 幺幺 bells are hung. The orchestrion of ancient music in general. When read lè, it means the effect produced by music, pleasure, joy. (395) 木

笑 ㄒㄧㄠˋ hsiào to laugh. Etymologically, 竹 bamboos 夭 rocked by the wind; the spasmodic motion of the belly, when a fat man is laughing. Radical 竹

難 ㄋㄢˊ nán difficult. The plight of 隹 chuī the birds when 堇 hàn the earth is dried and barren; difficult life. Pronounced nàn calamity; suffering; hardship; disaster. 隹

煩 ㄈㄢˊ fán to trouble; worry; grieved. From 火 huǒ fire and 頁 yèh head, implying trouble in the mind. 火

出 ㄔㄨ chū to issue; to go out; to produce; to offer. It represents 屮 stalks thrusting themselves out of 凵 the ground. 凵

翻 ㄈㄢ fān to turn; upset; overturn; translate; interpret. 羽 yǔ feathers, is ideographic for the fluttering of birds; a topsy-turvy motion; flying to and fro; hence, to turn over, etc. 番 fān is phonetic in value. 羽

厶 ㄙ sī (used only as a radical) private; selfish. 厶 a cocoon. It represents a silkworm that coils itself up, and shuts itself in its cocoon. By extension, selfish; to care only for oneself; private. 厶

白 ㄅㄞˊ pái white; clear; free; in vain. The sun that just appears. This meaning is represented by a small point (primitive) on the top of the sun when just below the horizon, filling the sky with white light, and hence it makes the character ideographic. 白

閒 ㄒㄧㄢˊ hsién free from work; leisurely. (used in combination) unoccupied; vacant; unrelated. From 門 mén door and 月 yüèh moon, probably to enjoy the moonlight when it is streaming in through a closed door. (408) 門

外 ㄨㄞˋ wai outside; out of; foreign. Composed of 夕 the evening, and 卜 to divine. When the tortoise shell was consulted about the meaning of a dream one had during the night, the divination ought to take place in the morning, or during the day; in any case before 夕 the evening. After sunset, 卜 the divination was no longer to the purpose, being outside the ritual limits. 卜

華 ㄏㄨㄚˊ huá (used in combination) glory, splendour. The original form is designed to represent a plant covered with flowers as a symbol of beauty and glory; a term for China, intended to describe her civilisation and literature. Pronounced Huà, the surname Hua. 艹

In some cases the characters do not describe an analogy as much as a representation which is literally connected to the concept. The East for example is described by a rising sun shining through the trees and the West is described by birds going to roost when the sun sets at night, while country is land plus people and weapons.

東 ㄉㄨㄥˉ tūng the East; eastern. A pictogram of 日 the sun shining through 木 trees. 木

西 ㄒㄧˉ hsī the West; western. Image of a bird sitting on its nest; so it implies the West, for birds go to roost when the sun sets. 襾

國 ㄍㄨㄛˊ kuó a nation; country. □ a country which consists of 一 land, 口 population and 戈 weapons. □

4. Knowledge:

The characters that relate to accumulating knowledge are particularly interesting in the style they reveal. To identify is to be patient in asking question while to be in error is to "talk big". Printed words are like "children" in the author's house and to teach is to place hands upon the student from above. To find out is to go beyond human effort to ritual sacrifice if necessary. A scholar knows all things and to act is to work until you grow old.

認 ㄖㄣ⁴ jèn identify; recognise. (used in combination) be acquainted with; know. In order to know well one must be 忍 jěn patient in 言 yán asking questions. 言

誤 ㄨˋ wù to be in error; to mistake; hinder through a mistake; unintentional wrong; error; mistake; wrong; wrongly. From 言 yán words and 吳 wú to talk big. 言

字 ㄗˋ tzù a written or printed character; a word. To have 子 children in one's 宀 house. Figuratively 字 the words are children, like the articles produced by authors; to authors, words have untold possibilities like young children. 子

學 ㄒㄧㄠˊ; ㄒㄩㄝˊ hsiáo; hsüéh to learn; study; imitate. 爻 both hands of the master, 又 acting from above upon the darkness which 冖 covers the mind of 子 the disciple. Pronounced ㄒㄩㄝˊ hsüéh to learn; study; imitate; a science. 子

察 ㄔㄚˊ ch'á find out; look into; investigate; examine. From 宀 mián under the cover or unable to find out and 祭 chì to sacrifice; implying that when human efforts were unable to find the cause, then sacrifice was the best thing. 宀

士 ㄕˋ shìh a scholar; a learned man. From 十 ten and 一 one, because a scholar is acquainted from one to ten, or with all things. 士

做 ㄗㄨㄛˋ tsuò to do; make; act. 攵 to work until 人 one gets 古 old. 人

5. Conclusion:

These brief examples provide a context for the non-Chinese speaker working among Chinese people to better understand their meaning through metaphor. Body parts are anthropomorphized to denote qualities of behavior and abstract concepts in very literal forms. The person is seen in a context of complicated features acting in or out of harmony with one another. We see behavior in the context of nature imagery through a series of small stories that illustrate abstract concepts and establish the context of their meaning. The accumulation of knowledge as a process is likewise described comprehensively by analogy.

The existing classification systems for describing the use of metaphor in Western languages is not adequate for describing pictographic metaphors, as in the Chinese language. And yet through understanding the metaphors of abstract concepts in Chinese characters we have a means of better understanding Chinese people.

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